

REPORTING BIRDS SUSPECTED TO HAVE WEST NILE VIRUS

Procedures for the Public to Use in 2006

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Mosquito Control Section is again asking the public's help in the state's surveillance and monitoring efforts for West Nile Virus by reporting sick or dead wild birds that might have been stricken or killed by West Nile Virus – a mosquito-borne disease of considerable concern to human health and horses.

The Mosquito Control Section requests that the public report only sick or dead **crows, blue jays, American robins, northern cardinals, hawks or owls**, or localized clusters of five or more sick or dead wild birds of any species. For dead birds, specimens should appear to have been dead for less than 24 hours and not killed by other obvious causes.

Sick or dead birds for the species of interest can be reported to the Mosquito Control Section from Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. by calling:

New Castle County findings (Glasgow office): **(302) 836-2555**

Kent or Sussex County findings (Milford office): **(302) 422-1512**

Citizens calling after business hours or on weekends or holidays should leave their information on the answering machine. Callers should give their name, phone number, address and brief message about the finding. However, the public should be aware that some calls left more than 24 hours before Mosquito Control can review them (e.g. those calls often left between Friday evening and Sunday morning) unfortunately usually result in the bird conditions becoming too deteriorated for virus testing.

The Mosquito Control Section will continue its past practice of documenting all phone reports for the species of interest, but again will not collect and analyze all reported birds, since the screening criteria for collecting and testing specimens are often not met. The Section expects to analyze approximately as many birds in 2006 as we did in 2005. We are interested in when and where West Nile Virus might first appear in Delaware this year and in monitoring the timing and locations of its possible spread throughout Delaware. However, we don't need to collect and analyze every specimen in order to accomplish this objective, even when the specimens appear very promising for testing. Our sampling strategy this year will again be to wisely allocate the number of birds we collect and test between mid-April and late October, and to concentrate on good representation throughout Delaware to generate the most useful information. This means that the Section will not be collecting too many birds from any one area.

There is no cause for alarm or fear that uncollected specimens will transmit West

Nile Virus to humans or pets that might consume a sick bird or its carcass. Dead birds or carcasses can be left to decompose in place, or if aesthetic or other concerns require their removal, they can be disposed of in the garbage after being bagged, or they can be buried. When handling any dead bird killed by any cause, direct human skin contact with the specimen should be avoided by using gloves or a shovel to dispose of the carcass.

The Mosquito Control Section's phone numbers above should also be used for citizens to report intolerable numbers of biting mosquitoes. The Section uses this information about severe mosquito nuisance situations to help determine when and where to provide control services.